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UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS  
AND INTERFERENCES

*Ex parte* JAMES MCCOY and DOUGLAS BARNES

Appeal 2010-003000  
Application 09/785,010  
Technology Center 3600

Before HUBERT C. LORIN, ANTON W. FETTING, and JOSEPH A. FISCHETTI, *Administrative Patent Judges*.

**FETTING, Administrative Patent Judge.**

## DECISION ON APPEAL<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The two-month time period for filing an appeal or commencing a civil action, as recited in 37 C.F.R. § 1.304, or for filing a request for rehearing, as recited in 37 C.F.R. § 41.52, begins to run from the “MAIL DATE” (paper delivery mode) or the “NOTIFICATION DATE” (electronic delivery mode) shown on the PTOL-90A cover letter attached to this decision.

1 STATEMENT OF THE CASE<sup>2</sup>

2       James McCoy and Douglas Barnes (Appellants) seek review under  
3 35 U.S.C. § 134 (2002) of a final rejection of claims 22 and 24-38, the only  
4 claims pending in the application on appeal. We have jurisdiction over the  
5 appeal pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 6(b) (2002).

6       The Appellants invented a micropayment accounting system for  
7 enabling in-kind transactions within a network. Specification 1.

8       An understanding of the invention can be derived from a reading of  
9 exemplary claim 22, which is reproduced below [bracketed matter and some  
10 paragraphing added].

11       22. A distributed system for publishing and retrieving content  
12 in a network, comprising:

13       [1] a plurality of computer systems connected together in a  
14 peer-to-peer fashion and having characterizing network  
15 resources including any disk space, bandwidth, and CPU cycles  
16 for performing peer-to-peer interactions across the network,  
17 wherein the network resources can be contributed to the  
18 network by one or more contributing computer systems in  
19 return for a predetermined amount of credits, wherein the

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<sup>2</sup> Our decision will make reference to the Appellants' Appeal Brief ("App. Br.," filed January 8, 2007) and Reply Brief ("Reply Br.," filed August 17, 2007), and the Examiner's Answer ("Ans.," mailed October 8, 2009), and Final Rejection ("Final Rej.," mailed January 9, 2006).

1 credits are accumulated by the contributing computer systems  
2 contributing network resources to the network, and wherein the  
3 contributing computer systems can exchange the credits with  
4 other contributing computer systems for performing peer-to-  
5 peer interactions across the network using the network  
6 resources; and

[2] one or more agent applications distributed across the network and associated with the computer systems for allowing the computer systems to publish content to and retrieve content from the network by initiating the peer-to-peer interactions across the network between the agent applications.

12

13 The Examiner relies upon the following prior art:

Saylor et al. US 6,888,929 B1 May 3, 2005

14       Claim 22 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as  
15      being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the  
16      subject matter which the Appellants regard as the invention.

17       Claims 22 and 24-38 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as  
18       unpatentable over Saylor.

19

## ISSUES

21 The issue of whether the Examiner erred in rejecting claims 22 under 35  
22 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly  
23 point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the Appellants regard  
24 as the invention turns on whether a person with ordinary skill in the art  
25 would have understood what is being claimed by the limitation “having  
26 characterizing network resources including.”

1        The issue of whether the Examiner erred in rejecting claims 22 and 24-  
2        38 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Saylor turns on whether  
3        Saylor describes or suggests several limitations of claim 22.

4

5                    FACTS PERTINENT TO THE ISSUES

6        The following enumerated Findings of Fact (FF) are believed to be  
7        supported by a preponderance of the evidence.

8                    *Facts Related to the Prior Art*

9                    *Saylor*

10       01. Saylor is directed to a system and method for generating  
11       revenue from providing pages of voice content when users input a  
12       voice code corresponding to that content. Saylor 1:19-21. Saylor  
13       describes an architecture where one or more voice network access  
14       providers (VNAPs) connect to a plurality of users over a  
15       communications network. Saylor 14:4-6. VNAPs further connect  
16       to VPage server systems and a VCode registration system over a  
17       communications network. Saylor 14:6-10. Content is delivered to  
18       users from VNAP databases or from VPage server systems.  
19       Saylor 14:21-24.

20       02. Saylor describes that a user can access content corresponding to  
21       a VCode through an interactive communications device. Saylor  
22       2:3-6. Pages consisting of groupings of content are referred to as  
23       VPages. Saylor 2:13-17. A VCode consists of multiple portions  
24       that correspond to a predetermined category, VBooks, or VPages.

1 Saylor 3:26-29 and 3:39-40. Many companies can provide  
2 content and have codes assigned to that company. Saylor 4:7-10.  
3 A VCode registry returns the address of the content and if the  
4 VCode is a multi-level VCode the registry can resolve the various  
5 portions of the VCode to identify the content. Saylor 4:19-23.

6 03. Various fee generating and billing methodologies may be  
7 implemented. Saylor 6:53-54. A user may be charged based on  
8 the duration of a call by implementing a 900 number. Saylor  
9 6:54-57. A user can also be charged based on the time of the call,  
10 on a per call or per VCode basis, or on a subscription or flat fee  
11 basis. Saylor 6:57-63. Different fees can be assessed for different  
12 VCodes. Saylor 6:63-64. VCodes can be assigned a specific  
13 number of credits that a user purchases from the system and  
14 purchases a VCode by submitting the appropriate number of  
15 credits. Saylor 6:64-67. The per unit cost may be reduced for  
16 users who use the system more. Saylor 7:2-3.

17 04. A voice network access provider (VNAP) charges the user the  
18 fee for the content. Saylor 5:58-59. The VNAP shares a portion  
19 of the fee with the content display host, and in situations where  
20 the display host and content providers are the same, the content  
21 provider receives a share proportional to its contribution to the  
22 system. Saylor 5:58-67.

1

2

## ANALYSIS

3       *Claim 22 rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being*  
4       *indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject*  
5       *matter which the Appellants regard as the invention.*

6       The Examiner found that the limitation “having characterizing network  
7       resources including...” is vague and indefinite because the claim 22 fails to  
8       define this limitation. Ans. 3 and 10. The Appellants contend that the  
9       Specification fully describes this limitation, network resources have been in  
10       existence as described by the prior art, and a person with ordinary skill in the  
11       art would have understood what was being claimed. App. Br. 10-13 and  
12       Reply Br. 7-8. We agree with the Appellants. The test for definiteness  
13       under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, is whether “those skilled in the art  
14       would understand what is claimed when the claim is read in light of the  
15       specification.” *Orthokinetics, Inc. v. Safety Travel Chairs, Inc.*, 806 F.2d  
16       1565, 1576 (Fed. Cir. 1986)(citations omitted). Claim 22 specifically recites  
17       that characterizing network resources includes any disk space, bandwidth,  
18       and CPU cycles for performing peer-to-peer interactions across the network.  
19       As such, a person with ordinary skill in the art would have understood what  
20       was being claimed since the claim language itself provides an adequate  
21       description of what is being claimed. The Examiner failed to set forth any  
22       specific rationale that illustrates why this limitation is vague and indefinite.  
23       As such, we find that the Examiner erred in rejecting claim 22 under 35  
24       U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite.

25

3 The Appellants first contend that (1) Saylor fails to describe network  
4 resources can be contributed to a network by one or more contributing  
5 computer systems, as per claim 22. App. Br. 2-4 and Reply Br. 1-2. We  
6 disagree with the Appellants. Saylor describes a system where a user can  
7 access content that is provided by a content provider. FF 02. The system  
8 includes users, voice network access providers (VNAPs), VPage server  
9 systems, and a VCode registration system that are all connected over a  
10 communications network. FF 01. The VCode registration system maintains  
11 the address of the content and users can access the content from either  
12 VNAP databases or from VPage server systems of the content providers. FF  
13 01-02. Since the content can be accessed by a server system provided by the  
14 content providers that are independent of the VNAPs, the content providers  
15 are contributing these server systems, the disk space required to store the  
16 content, and the bandwidth to transfer the content to the VNAP network. As  
17 such, Saylor describes this limitation of claim 1. The Appellants also argue  
18 that the claimed invention is distinguished from the prior art because the  
19 claimed invention keeps track of which users provide resources, content, and  
20 indexing services within the network. App. Br. 3. However, claim 22 does  
21 not require these limitations and therefore this argument is not found to be  
22 persuasive.

23 The Appellants also contend that (2) Saylor fails to describe earning  
24 credits by contributing network resources to a network, as per claim 22.  
25 App. Br. 4-5 and Reply Br. 2-3. We disagree with the Appellants. The plain  
26 and ordinary definition of the term “credit” encompasses any benefit,

1 compensation, or acknowledgement for the performance of a task. Saylor  
2 describes various fee generating and billing methodologies may be  
3 implemented for the system. FF 03. The VNAP charges the user for the  
4 content and shares a proportion of the revenue generated with the display  
5 host. FF 04. In situations where the display host and the content providers  
6 are the same entity, content provider receives a share proportional to its  
7 contribution to the system. FF 04. As such, the content providers are  
8 compensated for their contributions to the system and therefore are receiving  
9 or earning credits for their contributions to the network. The Appellants  
10 further argue that Saylor fails to describes the network resources include any  
11 of disk space, bandwidth, or CPU cycles. App. Br. 4. However, as  
12 discussed *supra*, Saylor describes that a content provider contributes VPage  
13 server systems that provide content to the users and therefore contribute the  
14 disk space to store the content and the bandwidth to transfer the content to  
15 the user.

16 The Appellants further contend that (3) Saylor fails to describe a  
17 distributed system for publishing and retrieving content, as per claim 22.  
18 App. Br. 5-6 and Reply Br. 3-4. The Appellants specifically argue that the  
19 Specification defines a distributed system to consist of a group of non-alike  
20 computers that are connected together by a network and equipped with  
21 corresponding software so that the computers can coordinate their activities  
22 in a common scheme. App. Br. 5. We disagree with the Appellants. As  
23 discussed *supra*, Saylor describes a system that includes users, voice  
24 network access providers (VNAPs), VPage server systems, and a VCode  
25 registration system that are all connected over a communications network.  
26 FF 01. Each computer in this system includes software that enables a user to

1 access content. FF 01-04. As such, Saylor describes a distributed system,  
2 even as defined by the Appellants.

3 The Appellants additionally contend that (4) Saylor fails to describe  
4 publishing and retrieving content via peer-to-peer interactions and (5) Saylor  
5 fails to describe agent applications distributed across the network, as per  
6 claim 22. App. Br. 6-7 and Reply Br. 4-5. The Appellants specifically  
7 argue that a user must access some server to access a desired VPage and  
8 therefore Saylor must be using a client-server model instead of a peer-to-  
9 peer model. App. Br. 6. We disagree with the Appellants. Saylor describes  
10 that the address of a VPage is returned based on a submitted VCode. FF 02.  
11 A VCode can be a multi-level VCode, where the registry can resolve the  
12 various portions of the VCode to identify the content. FF 02. Since content  
13 is distributed amongst several servers and a user accesses content by  
14 accessing specific portions of the content on different servers, Saylor  
15 describes a peer-to-peer model and the use of agent applications to publish  
16 and retrieve content from the network. Although a user connects to a server  
17 to find the address of a VPage and that model resembles a client-server  
18 model, the access of content where the content is distributed in portions  
19 across several machines is descriptive of a peer-to-peer model.

20 The Appellants further contend that (6) the Examiner has failed to set  
21 forth any evidence of a motivation to modify Saylor and (7) there is no  
22 motivation to modify Saylor. App. Br. 8-10 and Reply Br. 6-7. We  
23 disagree with the Appellants. As discussed *supra*, Saylor suggests that  
24 content providers are compensated for their contributions of disk space  
25 (storage of content) and bandwidth (access to content) to the VNAP  
26 network. Saylor is concerned with distributing revenue generated by the

1 VNAP and collected from users to display hosts and content providers for  
2 their contributions to the network. FF 04. Therefore, it would have been  
3 obvious to a person with ordinary skill in the art to measure contributions by  
4 disk space, bandwidth, or CPU cycles since such metrics are commonly used  
5 in the computer networking arts. Saylor suggests a content provider  
6 contributes at least one of disk space, bandwidth, or CPU cycles and a  
7 person with ordinary skill in the art would have found it obvious to compensate  
8 content providers based on any of these metrics in order to fairly distribute  
9 revenue. As such, a person with ordinary skill in the art would have found it  
10 obvious to modify Saylor to include these features.

11

## 12 CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

13 The Examiner erred in rejecting claim 22 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second  
14 paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and  
15 distinctly claim the subject matter which the Appellants regard as the  
16 invention.

17 The Examiner did not err in rejecting claims 22 and 24-38 under 35  
18 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Saylor.

19

## 20 DECISION

21 To summarize, our decision is as follows.

22 • The rejection of claim 22 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as  
23 being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly

1 claim the subject matter which the Appellants regard as the invention  
2 is not sustained.

3 • The rejection of claims 22 and 24-38 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as  
4 unpatentable over Saylor is sustained.

5

6 No time period for taking any subsequent action in connection with this  
7 appeal may be extended under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a). *See* 37 C.F.R.  
8 § 1.136(a)(1)(iv) (2007).

9

10 **AFFIRMED**

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14 mev

15

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